



**Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona**

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**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF HISTORIC METH
CRACKDOWN OPERATION**

Arizona federal and tribal officials also begin initiative to fight meth in Indian country

PHOENIX — U.S. Attorney Paul K. Charlton announced today the involvement of the District of Arizona in the DEA-led "Operation Wildfire," the largest nationally coordinated law enforcement effort designed to target all levels of the methamphetamine manufacturing and distribution chain in the United States and continue the fight against the spread of methamphetamine. In five Arizona cities - Phoenix, Tucson, Sierra Vista, Kingman, and El Mirage - local law enforcement officials partnered with DEA Mobile Enforcement Teams (METs). Their joint efforts led to the arrest of 13 persons and the seizure of approximately 15 pounds of meth, five weapons and seven vehicles during six enforcement operations. DEA agents also conducted four methamphetamine awareness events and dismantled one non-operational meth lab.

In a press conference held today at the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales and DEA Administrator Karen P. Tandy announced the streamlined efforts of federal, state, and local officials to successfully execute this nationwide operation. This unprecedented law enforcement effort involved over 200 U.S. cities and resulted in the arrest of 427 individuals. The streamlined efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement resulted in the seizure of 209 pounds of methamphetamine, 201,035 tablets of pseudoephedrine, 158 kilograms of pseudoephedrine powder and 224,860 tablets of ephedrine. Fifty-six clandestine laboratories were seized in the nationwide sweep and 30 endangered children were removed from their meth environments. Finally, 28 vehicles and 123 weapons were seized during the raids and a total of 96 search warrants were executed.

"The scourge of methamphetamine demands strong partnerships and innovative solutions to fight the devastation it leaves behind," said Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales. "Through Operation Wildfire, we have joined with state and local law enforcement to successfully pursue meth peddlers and producers in over 200 cities. The Department of Justice is committed to using every available resource to ensure that our streets and neighborhoods are safe and that the methamphetamine problem is brought to an end."

Operation Wildfire was successful because of the numerous law enforcement and drug diversion tactics practiced by the DEA and their state and local law enforcement partners including; undercover meth purchases; meth laboratory identification and seizures; execution of search and arrest warrants; identification and dismantlement of large-scale meth trafficking organizations; deployment of DEA METs to assist state and local authorities in their meth investigations; and the investigations of pseudoephedrine importers, grey-market wholesalers and retailers.

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The Justice Department and DEA have been fighting methamphetamine for over 20 years and Operation Wildfire demonstrates the sustained efforts of the Department to target an unprecedented rise in the use, trafficking and manufacture of methamphetamine nationwide and to make advances on the national and international front to combat this unique drug. The actions of the past week represent the largest single enforcement effort against meth, but it is far from the first.

Arizona efforts in Indian country

Earlier in the month, federal and tribal law enforcement agencies in Arizona met at the U.S. Attorney's Office in Phoenix to discuss a plan to address the use and sale of methamphetamine in Indian Country within Arizona. The meeting was comprised of law enforcement leaders from 14 of the 21 federally recognized tribes within the state as well as leaders from DEA, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and the U.S. Attorney's Office. The purpose of the meeting was to formulate a plan to address the burgeoning methamphetamine problem within Arizona, specifically as it relates to Indian Country. Topics of discussion included investigative and prosecution strategies, as well as training and public education on the impact of methamphetamine use.

"While methamphetamine use and distribution is not unique to Indian country, the use of methamphetamine within the Indian communities of Arizona has had a profound effect," stated United States Attorney Paul K. Charlton. "A large percentage of the violent crimes prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office involve individuals under the influence of methamphetamine or other illegal substances. It is our sincere hope and belief that reducing the availability of methamphetamine within these communities will also bring a reduction in the number of violent crimes. It is a fight that we simply cannot afford to lose."

Special Agent in Charge Timothy J. Landrum of DEA in Phoenix added, "Methamphetamine is a drug that destroys both mind and body--rapidly and indiscriminately. Its presence in tribal communities is unwelcome, and DEA is proud to be partnering with the U.S. Attorney's Office, BIA and the FBI to help educate and train tribal law enforcement so that, together, we can combat this deadly drug."

"The FBI commends the U.S. Attorney's Office for its commitment to combat crimes related to the methamphetamine trafficking on our state's Indian Reservations," stated Special Agent in Charge, Jana Monroe, of the FBI's Phoenix office. "As with many enforcement partnerships, we look forward to the benefits such efforts will yield."

"Maintaining effective partnerships is essential to combat methamphetamine and violent crime in Indian country," stated Steven K. Juneau, BIA Special Agent in Charge. "The commitment from the U.S. Attorney's office, DEA, FBI, and Tribal Nations is a vital foundation to achieve long term success in our battle against methamphetamine."

"The methamphetamine problem is evident in Indian Country throughout North America. This joint effort between the tribes and federal law enforcement agencies is essential to the well-being of the culture and traditions of Native American tribes in Arizona," Dawn F. Wheeler, Deputy Chief of Police, Hualapai Nation Police Department.

At the conclusion of the meeting, representatives from DEA, FBI, BIA and the U.S. Attorney's Office agreed to work with tribal law enforcement to conduct a survey of each of the communities involved to determine the scope and nature of the problem and to assess and address issues related to training and available law enforcement resources. These surveys are to be completed within the

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next 60 days. The results of these surveys will then dictate the training and enforcement operations which are expected to follow shortly thereafter.

The battle against this destructive drug is one of nationwide consequences and the Justice Department partnering with the DEA are committed to sweeping meth out of America's streets and homes. The fight against this highly addictive drug requires coordination at all levels. Operation Wildfire and the efforts in Arizona Indian Country show the dedication of law enforcement officials to work cooperatively to overcome this grave threat to society.

Community involvement among neighbors, parents, community leaders, schools, and businesses is also an essential component in this fight. It is extremely important to educate young people about the irreversible harm to the body and damage to the quality of life this drug leaves in its wake. In conjunction with this enforcement effort, DEA launched a new website today as part of its efforts to raise public awareness about the dangers of the drug. The anti-drug website, www.justthinktwice.com, gives teens and their parents the straight facts about methamphetamine, and it's not a pretty picture. The realities of meth's physical and emotional tolls are bluntly described and accompanied by photos that show before and after images of meth users. These photos graphically depict the ravages of meth on the user and make a strong statement about its consequences.

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